December 5, 2022

This year's CCAO / CEAO Winter Conference is this week! We hope you'll join us! Registration and a copy of the Conference Program can be found here.

If you are having issues viewing Counties Current in your email, click [View this email in your browser] at the top of the email.

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ASSOCIATION AND MEMBER NEWS

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CCAO members highlighted in recent issue of NACo's *CountyNews*

In the November 21 issue of *CountyNews*, a publication from NACo, three CCAO members featured prominently in stories.

First, the issue's lead story was about the newly-formed Housing Task Force which is co-chaired by Franklin County Commissioner Kevin Boyce. The article highlights the Magnet Fund program, which has allocated $4 million for affordable housing units across the county.

Boyce is quoted, "What the county has done is said, 'Let's look at this regionally and let's look at sort of spreading the peanut butter so that some of suburb partners and some of our townships can also provide affordable housing to their residents[.]"

The other article focuses on the "windfall elimination provision (WEP)," a provision of federal law that affects workers who have split their career between the private sector (thus paying into Social Security) and the public sector (thereby being covered by a pension and/or deferred compensation program). Depending on when the individual changes from private to public employment, their Social Security retirement payments could be reduced by up to 40%.

The article features Kris Lowdermilk, the HR Director for Tuscarawas County, Tuscarawas County Commissioner and CCAO 2nd Vice President Chris Abbuhl, and Shelby County Commissioner and Past President Julie Ehemann.

Lowdermilk, Abbuhl, and Ehemann discussed how the WEP is a barrier to recruitment of non-elected positions and a reason qualified candidates don't run for elected positions, particularly in rural areas.

You can access the issue of *CountyNews* through the link above or here. The article on the Housing Task force is on pages 1 and 2 and the article on the WEP is on pages 2 and 4.

Richard J. Regovich sworn in as Lake County Commissioner

Last Tuesday, Richard J. Regovich was sworn in as a Lake County Commissioner, filling the seat vacated by once and future Lake County Commissioner John Plecnik recently when Plecnik opted to run for the commissioner term starting on January 1, formerly held by Ron Young and currently held by interim Commissioner Mark Tyler (a race that Plecnik won, returning him to the Board of Commissioners after a brief absence). Regovich won the seat in the November 8 general election.

Regovich is no stranger to public service, previously serving as a Willowick councilman and more recently as the city's mayor.

He also is involved in the nonprofit organization Willowick Hearts and Hammers which assists local homeowners with safety repairs to their homes.

Register now for the 2022 CCAO/CEAO Winter Conference

The annual CCAO/CEAO Winter Conference, held this year from December 7 to 9, is this week! The theme for this year's conference is Innovation and Inspiration to Shape Ohio's Future. Register now to ensure you're able to learn from experts and fellow commissioners on issues facing counties today. Registration is also available day-of onsite.

You can view the Conference Program here! Please keep in mind that some rooms may change between now and the event.

More information about the conference and links to register and reserve hotel rooms are available on the CCAO website.

CCAO publishes Fall edition of County Leader

CCAO recently published the Fall 2022 edition of its quarterly magazine, *County Leader*. The 27-page issue features columns from CCAO President and Montgomery County Commissioner Debbie Lieberman and CCAO Executive Director Cheryl Subler, features on Fairfield County Commissioner Steve Davis's Uber driving and the Drone Program Pilot in Noble County, and updates from CEBCO, CORSA, and the CCAO Service Corp.

Read it today!

STATE AND FEDERAL NEWS

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Bureau of Workers Compensation makes reclassification of certain public employees

The BWC has issued guidance on a new manual classification for public employers effective 1/1/2023 – ***Public Employer Clerical & Clerical Telecommuter Employees***. The premium rate for this classification of employees is significantly lower than the general rate for county employees: the 2023 rate will be $0.15 per $100 payroll compared to $0.71 for other county employees. Classifying employees in the new manual could represent a significant premium savings for counties.

This BWC bulletin provides specific direction and the requirements for the new manual classification.

EDUCATION AND GRANTS

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Visit the Grants and Funding Opportunities page on the CCAO website for a detailed listing of open grant programs.

THURSDAY: The Criminal Justice Center of Northeast Ohio Medical University to host webinar on incarcerated individual mental health care

This Thursday at noon, the Criminal Justice Coordinating Center of Excellence at the Northeast Ohio Medical University, in conjunction with the Ohio Attorney General's office, will host a webinar entitled, "Collaborative Mental Health Care for Incarcerated Individuals."

The webinar will focus on the newly-opened jail in Franklin County and its many innovations to improve the mental health of incarcerated individuals. These strategies were developed after reviewing other jails nationwide and in consultation with the Stepping Up Project.

CCAO encourages counties to recommend that their jail personnel register for this webinar. While not every practice will be replicable in counties without new jails, learning from other counties is always useful in developing local strategies.

You can register at the link above or here.

CCAO hosting webinar on drainage and road use agreements for renewable energy projects

On December 14 at 9:30 a.m., CCAO will host a webinar put on by Auglaize County Engineer Andrew Baumer and Auglaize County Administrator Erica Preston regarding the county's approach to renewable energy projects. Particular focus will given to the negotiation of DRUMAs (Drainage and Road Use Maintenance Agreements) with the developer of the energy project.

With the passage of Senate Bill 52, county government has the opportunity to become involved in the siting of utility-scale wind and solar projects. One of the biggest challenges is to ensure proper maintenance and repair of roads and ditches near the project site both during and after construction. This webinar will be of interest to counties that have seen interest among wind and solar energy developers increase in recent years.

Registration can be completed through the link above or here.

Overview of available grants

CCAO has added several new grants to our Grants and Funding Opportunities page. The following are grants that either have looming application deadlines or are newly posted.

- **Appalachian Community Grant Program, Round One** *(State)*
    - This grant is the first round of funding granted under Governor DeWine's historical $500 million investment in Ohio's Appalachian communities. The deadline for the first round of proposals is December 9.
- Volunteer Fire Assistance Grant **and** Fire Department Training Reimbursement Grant *(State)*
    - These grants are open to small fire departments (serving no more than 10,000 and 25,000 residents, respectively). They aim to assist departments with purchasing equipment and paying for employee training. Their deadlines are, respectively, January 15 and January 31.
- **National Fish Passage Program** *(Federal)*
    - This program will provide assistance to remove instream barriers and enhance aquatic organisms' ability to pass through waterways. **Letters of Intent must be submitted by December 12**. This is not a complete application. If an entity is invited to submit a full application, they will have until December 31, 2023 to do so.
- **Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Program** *(Federal)*
    - Available to governments within the Lake Erie Basin, this program will provide assistance to encourage conservation, restoration, research, and management of the fish and wildlife resources of the Great Lakes. The deadline to apply is January 5.
- **Affordable Connectivity Outreach Grant** *(Federal)*
    - The goal of this program is to increase awareness of and the participation in the Affordable Connectivity Program for eligible low-income households. A total of $60 million is available, with each state and territory guaranteed a certain amount ($500,000 for states, $250,000 for territories). The rest will be awarded competitively. The deadline to apply is January 9.

Please visit the Grants and Funding Opportunities to see other available programs that may be of interest to your county or your community!

ARPA and BIL RESOURCES

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This section of Counties Current will be a permanent fixture for the foreseeable future to help counties with the ins and outs of the American Rescue Plan Act and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. These two laws provide a once-in-a-generation investment.

Resources for ARPA Reporting and Compliance

The most recent version of the US Treasury Reporting Guidance was published September 20, 2022. Counties and other local governments with populations greater than 250,000 or ARPA distributions greater than $10 million are required to file Project and Expenditure Reports no later than 30 days after the end of each quarter throughout the grant period. Other recipients will file Project and Expenditure Reports annually by April 30.

Members are urged to consult resources from US Treasury, NACo, and the Ohio Office of Budget and Management for more information about reporting and how to use ARPA funds. CCAO maintains a list of ARPA links and resources, including a comparison of state and federal procurement laws, at the ARPA Resources page.

Ohio Ethics Commission issues statement regarding stimulus funds

Last week the Ohio Ethics Commission released a statement ensuring that public officials are aware that stimulus funds, such as those received under the federal American Rescue Plan Act and the funds that communities will receive under Governor Mike DeWine's Appalachian investment program, are public funds and that conflict of interest laws must be observed.

To that effect, the Commission also recirculated its Advisory Opinion No. 2009-006, issued in 2009 regarding stimulus funds made available to governments under the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. It provides a more in-depth examination of potential conflicts of interest with stimulus funds, including a discussing regarding vendors.

CCAO encourages members refamiliarize themselves with this Advisory Opinion and conflict of interest laws to ensure good stewardship of ARPA and Appalachia funds.

Guidance and overview of available BIL funding available from NACo and the Ohio Department of Transportation

NACo and ODOT each host a resource page providing information to counties about the Bipartican Infrastructure Law. The pages are rich with information including multiple tables providing overviews and links to funding opportunities, a timeline of upcoming grant programs, and much more.

The NACo website can be found here and the ODOT website can be found here.

CCAO strongly encourages counties to frequently visit the sites and apply for funding through the myriad of programs to bring valuable federal funds to Ohio communities.

COUNTY NEWS

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Each week Counties Current highlights the happenings in our counties in the words of their local media. One county from each of the CCAO's five districts is highlighted.

Northwest District

Commissioners working to finalize next year's budget

LimaOhio.com, November 30, 2022

Allen County Commissioners Beth Seibert, Brian Winegardner and Cory Noonan met Wednesday afternoon to discuss pending budget plans. The Commissioners reviewed potential budget plans with the Clerk of the Board Kelli Singhaus.

An official budget has not yet been finalized. Allen County Commissioners continue to work hard at preparing the county for the new year.

"We are continuing to work this number down but we are still waiting on the budget commission to come forth with their number," said Comissioner Beth Seibert. "We take their number and we look at what number among the cash balance we have and we build the 2023 budget from there."

Northeast District

Grant to help fund Wayne County Rails to Trails path in Marshallville

DailyRecord.com, December 2, 2022

KEY ACTION Approved a grant agreement to begin Phase 4 of a construction project in collaboration with the Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study and Wayne County Rails to Trails to build a bicycle trail in Marshallville.

DISCUSSION The Wayne County engineer recently applied and received approval for a grant to begin the next phase of the development project to build a bike and walking trail of about 1.1 miles on an abandoned railroad starting at Market Street in Marshallville to Coal Bank Road in Chippewa Township. The agreement, with project costs at over $820,000, will be 80% covered by a grant through the Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study (AMATS), with the remaining 20% funded by the nonprofit Rails to Trails of Wayne County, which will be paid to the Wayne County Transportation Improvement District.

Central District

Franklin County approves new animal-control case-management system

Columbus Dispatch, November 30, 2022

Franklin County Animal Care and Control will start using a new case-management system.

The county Board of Commissioners approved a $109,500 contract, 2-0, Tuesday with Pethealth Services (USA) Inc. for the implementation of new case-management software for the county's Dog Shelter & Adoption Center. Board President Erica Crawley was absent.

Based in suburban Chicago, Pethealth Services (USA) was the only vendor to submit a proposal out of at least 29 vendors the county had contacted with its request for proposals, according to information provided to commissioners. The county Purchasing Department reviewed the proposal and determined it was "the lowest and best proposer."

Southwest District

Dr. O'dell Owens could be honored with name on new crime lab

Cincinnati Enquirer, November 30, 2022

In the spring of 2021, Hamilton County opened a $55 million, 90,000-square-foot lab for the county coroner's office.

It could soon bear the name of the late Dr. O'dell Owens.

Hamilton County Board of Commissioners President Stephanie Summerow Dumas said she plans to introduce a resolution at the Dec. 8 commissioners meeting to name the facility after Owens, a former county coroner who died Nov. 23.

Dumas said she had the idea to name the county's new crime lab after Owens before he died.

"It is not just about his involvement in the coroner's office," Dumas said. "How do you recognize a giant of a man?"

Southeast District

Economic Development Council brings over $8M to county

Athens Messenger, November 30, 2022

During the past year, Athens County Economic Development Council and Athens County Port Authority helped secure $8.39 million in funding for the county.

Mollie Fitzgerald executive director visited the Athens County Commissioners and Athens City Council at meetings earlier this week.

The funding was secured either directly or by assisting other entities.

The biggest piece of the money — $5 million — was a US Economic Development Administration grant for the Port Authority speculative building in The Plains, she said.

The building is expected for bring over 100 full-time equivalent jobs to Athens County and create $5 million in private investments. Construction is scheduled to begin by the second quarter of 2023, Fitzgerald said.

DATES TO REMEMBER

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DECEMBER 7 - DECEMBER 9, 2022
CCAO-CEAO WINTER CONFERENCE (Register here)

DECEMBER 14
WEBINAR: Implementing Drainage and Road Use Maintenance Agreements for Renewable Energy Projects (Register here)

DID YOU KNOW?

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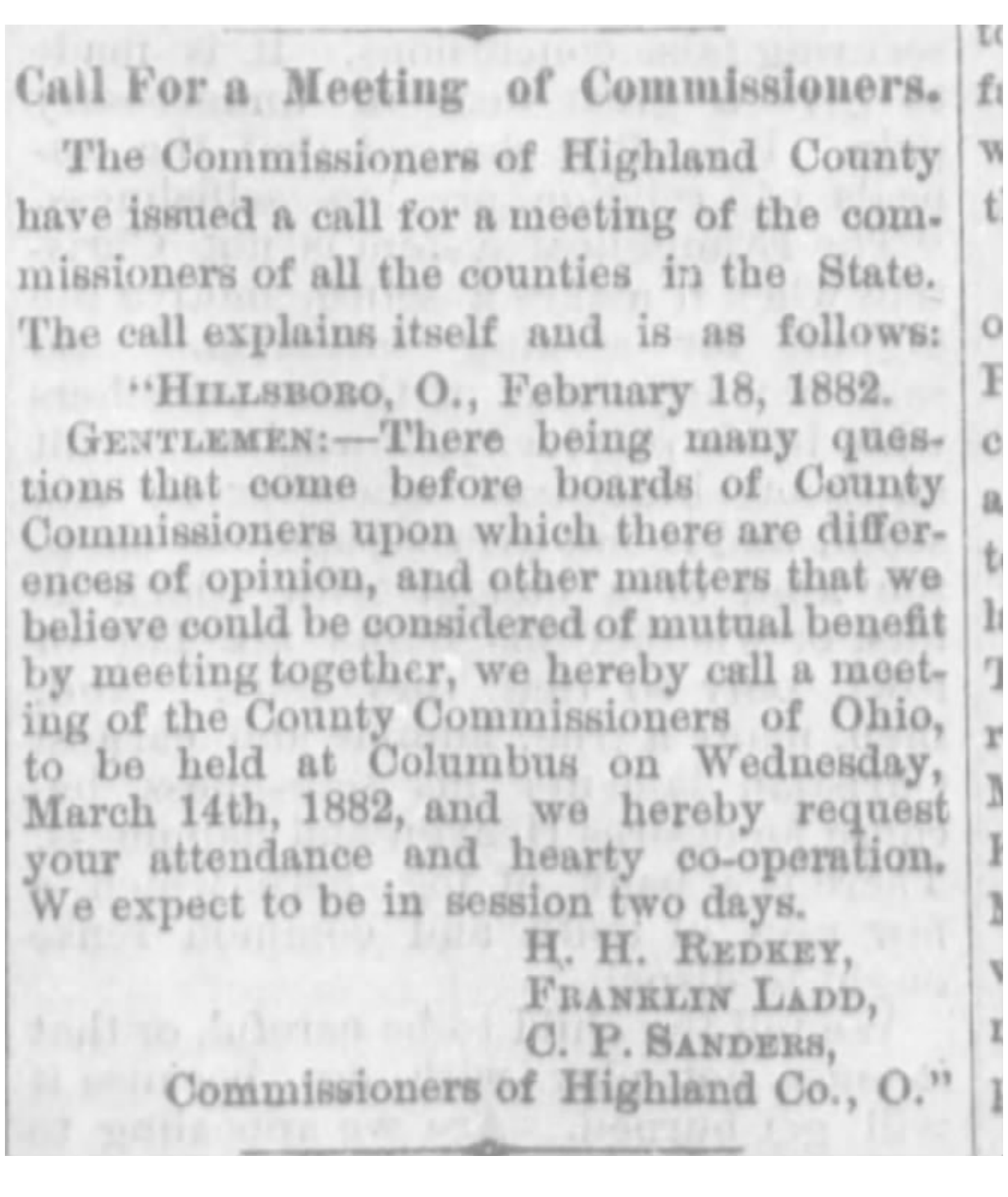
County Commissioners Association of Ohio

As CCAO prepares for this year's Winter Conference it's worth reflecting on how the Association got here. The clippings below were all gathered from the archives at Newspapers.com.

CALL FOR A MEETING OF ALL COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

The clipping below, from the March 2, 1882 edition of the Hillsboro Weekly News, quotes a call put out two weeks prior by the Highland County Commissioners to their colleagues across the state for a meeting of all county commissioners on March 14 of the same year. While the call itself does not explicitly advocate for the creation of a statewide association, that is how the meeting would play out, as evidenced by the next clipping.



Call For a Meeting of Commissioners.

The Commissioners of Highland County have issued a call for a meeting of the commissioners of all the counties in the State. The call explains itself and is as follows:

"Hillsboro, O., February 18, 1882.

Gentlemen:—There being many questions that come before boards of County Commissioners upon which there are differences of opinion, and other matters that we believe conld be considered of mutual benefit by meeting together, we hereby call a meeting of the County Commissioners of Ohio, to be held at Columbus on Wednesday, March 14th, 1882, and we hereby request your attendance and hearty co-operation. We expect to be in session two days.

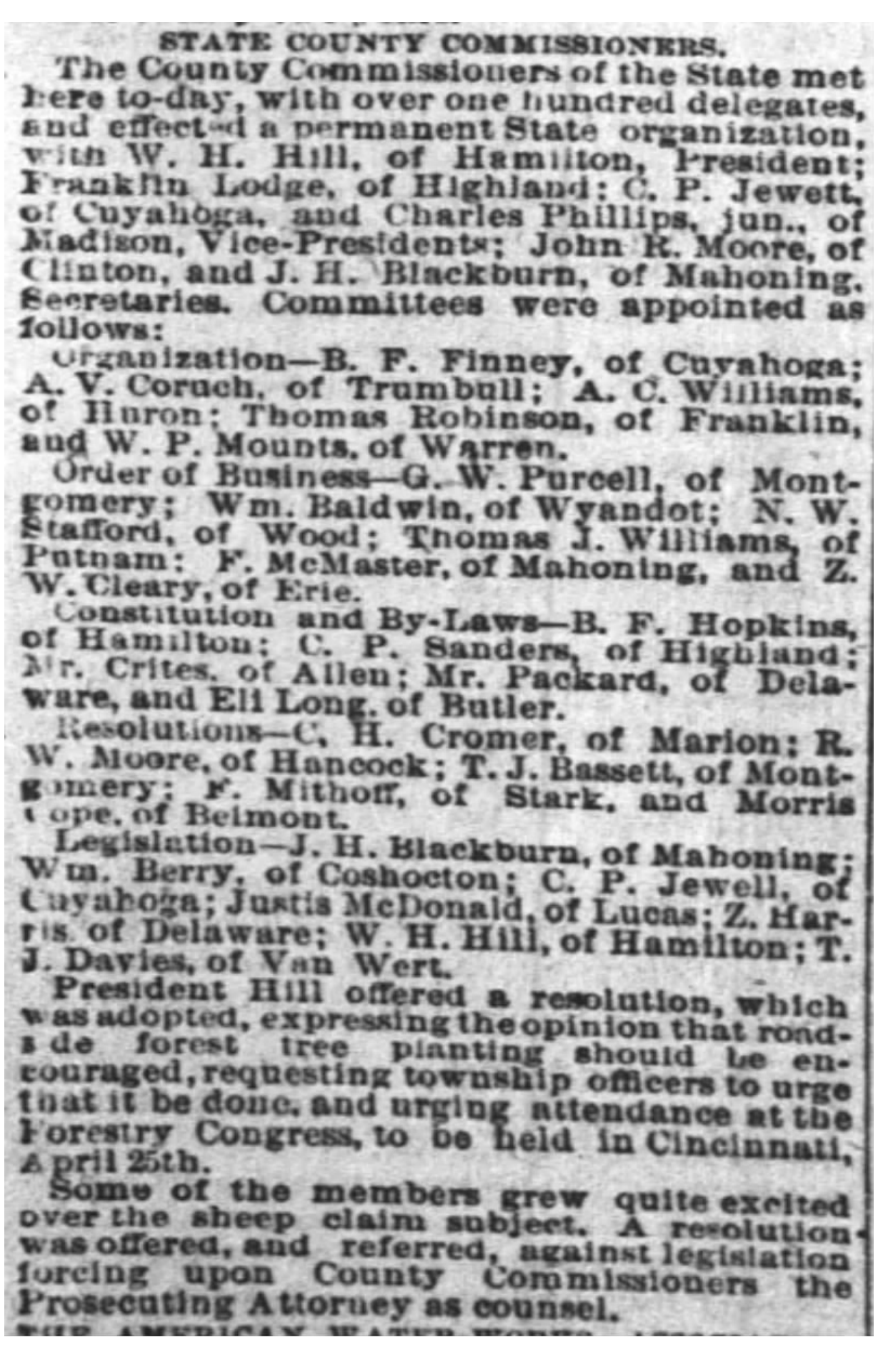
H. H. Redkey,
Franklin Ladd,
C. P. Sanders,
Commissioners of Highland Co., O."

CREATION OF THE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ASSOCIATION OF OHIO

This clipping, from the March 16, 1882 edition of the Cincinnati Enquirer, reports on the proceedings of the meeting of statewide county commissioners that had occurred in Columbus.

As it shows, during the course of the meeting the commissioners in attendance decided created a permanent statewide organization - what today is the CCAO. Officers were elected, including Hamilton County Commissioner W.H. Hill as the first Association President and Highland County Commissioner Franklin Ladd (erroneously named "Franklin Lodge" in the Enquirer), one of the three commissioners to call for the meeting, as one of Association Vice-Presidents.

The clipping highlights three policy areas that the fledgling CCAO discussed: advocating for the planting of forest trees, sheep claims (compensation to sheep owners of sheep killed by dogs, a process overseen by commissioners), and a bill in the General Assembly that would require commissioners to use the County Prosecutor as legal counsel.



STATE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS.

The County Commissioners of the State met here to-day, with over one hundred delegates, and effected a permanent State organization, with W. H. Hill, of Hamilton, President; Franklin Lodge, of Highland; C. P. Jewett, of Cuyahoga, and Charles Phillips, jun., of Madison, Vice-Presidents; John R. Moore, of Clinton, and J. H. Blackburn, of Mahoning, Secretaries. Committees were appointed as follows:

Organization—B. F. Finney, of Cuyahoga; A. V. Coruch, of Trumbull; A. C. Williams, of Huron; Thomas Robinson, of Franklin, and W. P. Mounts, of Warren.

Order of Business—G. W. Purcell, of Montgomery; Wm. Baldwin, of Wyandot; N. W. Stafford, of Wood; Thomas J. Williams, of Putnam; F. McMaster, of Mahoning, and Z. W. Cleary, of Erie.

Constitution and By-Laws—B. F. Hopkins, of Hamilton; C. P. Sanders, of Highland; Mr. Crites, of Allen; Mr. Packard, of Delaware, and Eli Long, of Butler.

Resolutions—C. H. Cromer, of Marion; R. W. Moore, of Hancock; T. J. Bassett, of Montgomery; F. Mithoff, of Stark, and Morris Pope, of Belmont.

Legislation—J. H. Blackburn, of Mahoning; Wm. Berry, of Coshocton; C. P. Jewell, of Cuyahoga; Justis McDonald, of Lucas; Z. Harris, of Delaware; W. H. Hill, of Hamilton; T. J. Davies, of Van Wert.

President Hill offered a resolution, which was adopted, expressing the opinion that roadside forest tree planting should be encouraged, requesting township officers to urge that it be done, and urging attendance at the Forestry Congress, to be held in Cincinnati, April 25th.

Some of the members grew quite excited over the sheep claim subject. A resolution was offered, and referred, against legislation forcing upon County Commissioners the Prosecuting Attorney as counsel.

FROM 1882 TO 2022 AND BEYOND

And there you have it! The County Commissioners Association of Ohio was born March 14 - March 16, 1882, out of a desire by the Highland County Commissioners, and clearly seconded by commissioners across the state, to work with their counterparts in other counties on issues of common concern.

While the issues have changed since Commissioners Redkey, Ladd, and Sanders put out their call 140 years ago (mediating compensation disputes when dogs kill sheep is luckily not something that commissioners have to deal with on a daily basis anymore), the underlying thought process that they had is shared by commissioners today.

Counties are stronger together and fellow commissioners are a valuable resource for how to address issues facing one's community. The phrase "Stronger Counties, Stronger Ohio" may not have been in the lexicon of the era, Redkey, Ladd, Sanders, W.H. Hill of Hamilton County, John R. Moore of Clinton County, and the rest of the commissioners who were in attendance at the creation of the CCAO would almost surely would have agreed with the sentiment.

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